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ABSTRACT

Organizations can try to see into the future by identifying and describing megatrends--the large social, economic, political, and technological changes that have long-term effects. Recognizing the extensive benefits of considering future shifts and trends in the strategic planning process, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) recently carried out several activities designed to identify megatrends that will affect education in the Pacific region over the next 10 years. Through these efforts, PREL hopes to accomplish the following: provide a structure for planning, prepare for future opportunities, and "ride the wave rather than be tumbled by it." The first group that contributed to identifying Pacific megatrends was the Pacific Curriculum and Instruction Council, whose members include the chiefs of curriculum and instruction in all 10 Pacific entities served by PREL. Results showed a great deal of overlap and convergence between the different groups. The following descriptions or statements emerged: demand for educational accountability, the use of a reliance on technology, growing but still fragile economies, increased westernization but retention of culture and language, and increased need for teacher training, collaboration, and demographic shifts. (DFR)

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Pacific Megatrends in Education

By Ormond W. Hammond*

In a society that is constantly changing, how do modern organizations determine the best action plan without the ability to predict the future? Organizations can try to "see into the future" by identifying and describing "Megatrends"—the "large social, economic, political, and technological changes" that have long-term effects (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990, p. 12). Naisbitt and Aburdene, who popularized the term "Megatrends" in their book of the same name, identified the major forces that they saw shaping the 1980s, including the following shifts:

Industrial Society	→	Information Society
National Economy	→	World Economy
Forced Technology	→	High Tech/High Touch
Institutional Help	→	Self-Help
Either/Or	→	Multiple Option

Their follow-up book, *Megatrends 2000* (1990), offered the following revised set of Megatrends for the 1990s:

- The Booming Global Economy
- A Renaissance in the Arts
- The Emergence of Free-Market Socialism
- The Rise of the Pacific Rim
- The Age of Biology

Recognizing the extensive benefits of considering future shifts and trends in the strategic planning process, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) recently carried out several activities

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designed to identify Megatrends that will affect education in the Pacific region over the next ten years. Through these efforts, PREL hoped to accomplish the following:

- Provide a structure for planning. Program planning usually begins with a statement of needs. Megatrends can help planners see what those needs are or might be.
- Prepare for future opportunities. Megatrends help planners see potential opportunities for growth AND new initiatives.
- "Ride the wave rather than be tumbled by it." Trends are like waves: if a surfer is unprepared or unaware of an oncoming wave, he or she can get caught in the wrong position and wipe out. Similarly, planners want their agencies to be in the right position to take maximum advantage of the forces that will affect them in the future.

The Process

The first group that contributed to identifying Pacific Megatrends was the Pacific Curriculum and Instruction Council (PCIC); PCIC members include the chiefs of Curriculum and Instruction in all ten Pacific entities served by PREL: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The second contributing group consisted of PREL's Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Task Leaders—PREL staff members primarily responsible for carrying out the tasks of the REL program in the Pacific region. Finally, PREL's Board reviewed and provided input on the work of the two groups.

The process, which followed the guidelines of the Nominal Group Process (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975), began by presenting a guiding question:

> WHAT ARE THE MAJOR TRENDS THAT WILL MOST INFLUENCE THE PACIFIC REGION AND PREL'S WORK OVER THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS?

Then, a facilitator guided each group through the following steps:

1. Quiet time: Participants think about and answer the question. (five minutes)
2. Sharing: They take turns offering a trend until all answers are recorded on chart paper.
3. Discussion: They discuss and clarify the identified trends.
4. Responses: Similar responses are grouped; if necessary, the group votes for the top five.

The results showed a great deal of overlap and convergence between the different groups. The Pacific Megatrends in Education presented here represent the collective efforts of all three groups. The descriptions or statements under each of the Megatrends come directly from the groups, with only minor editorial changes. They are not presented in any priority order; all are considered of equally high importance.

Pacific Megatrends

Demand for Educational Accountability

- Accountability for quality of schooling
- Accountability for student learning results
- Accountability on the part of all involved: policymakers, teachers, administrators, parents, students
- Higher demand for quality in education and educational research
- Greater accountability for funds and services
- Need to track impact of improvement efforts on student learning

Use of and Reliance on Technology

- Greater and more focused use of technology
- Increased access to technology
- Increase in distance learning and Internet education
- Improvement in information management systems
- Expanding educational opportunities for students and teachers via technology infrastructure
- Major changes in educational structures, particularly institutions of higher education, with increased technological delivery of services
- Increase in collection and use of structured information
- Major advances in computer/human interfaces
- Increased emphasis on assistive technologies
- Use of databases and database-driven websites to make information available to funding sources
- Development of common databases across the region to assist in decision making for educational improvement

Growing but Still Fragile Economies

- Greater disparity between "haves" and "have nots"
- Better economic alignment with reality
- Increase in Asian influence and social impact, and economic and political development/growth
- Increase in multinational corporations
- Better transportation
- Economic assistance from other countries
- Increased need for and tension around finding the human and fiscal resources for K-12 education
- Diminishing U.S. funding
- Private corporations becoming involved in improving education
- More tourism, especially eco-tourism
- Better understanding of how to approach, talk, and interact with federal officials and funding sources
- Increased environmental awareness and concern over environmental issues
- Need to maximize PREL's resources and services
- Need to develop students' and the workforce's "competitive edge" in the Pacific

Increased Westernization but Retention of Culture and Language

- Resurgence of culturally based influences
- Increased funding for development of local educational materials
- More collaborative efforts in dealing with diversity
- Increase in first-language maintenance
- Resurgence and renewed interest in Pacific languages
- Continuing Westernization and push for cultural preservation
- Keeping cultural identity while seeking new ideas and connections
- Conflict between imposed U.S. educational initiatives and the desire for self-definition
- Increased number of private schools
- Differing values and priorities between people who have remained versus those who have come and gone
- Trend toward looking to regional cultures for insights

Increased Need for Teacher Training

- Change in teacher attitudes
- Increased number of professional educators
- Improvement in teacher training
- More teachers retiring
- Teachers moving away from textbooks and towards content knowledge and professional development
- Increased specialization, especially in terms of teacher needs
- More local teachers
- Need to strengthen collaborative efforts with institutions of higher education
- Higher standards for teacher certification
- Aging of educators
- Recycled teacher training

Collaboration

- More collaboration, increase in partnerships
- Increased parental participation
- More collaborative efforts in dealing with diversity
- Increase in diplomatic relations
- Increased global networking in education, connecting students across boundaries
- More demand for connection with U.S. mainstream

Demographic Shifts

- Diminishing numbers of people in region resulting from the end of the Compact of Free Association
- Greater number of migrants both leaving and arriving
- Changing of borders (political, geographic, environmental)
- Separation between locals and off-islanders
- Increased emphasis on the meaningful integration of the under-educated
- Increased number of private schools
- Widening gap between social classes
- More children and increased population
- Increased migration to Hawai'i and Guam
- Increased Asian immigration into region
- Better human health and greater longevity

Some other responses did not fit into any of the larger Megatrends but are worthy to note:

- Expanded opportunities in new areas of work, such as health
- Greater legal influence in education
- Increased emphasis on using research-based programs and materials
- Failure to meet standards
- More stress!

The results of these planning exercises were shared with the PREL Board of Directors and with others in the Pacific region as part of PREL's ongoing strategic planning process. In response, the Board approved a revised a mission statement that reflects the identified Pacific Megatrends in Education:

> **PREL'S MISSION IS TO STRENGTHEN CULTURE, INCREASE LITERACY, AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE LOCALLY, REGIONALLY, AND GLOBALLY.**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Pacific Megatrends in Education that were identified through PREL's strategic planning activities can inform educators and policymakers within the region and beyond. Of course, Megatrends are only predications, and predictions may or may not come true. However, the Megatrends identified in this briefing paper represent the most up-to-date thinking of Pacific educators, who are in the best position to sense the direction and changing forces at work in regional education. The author makes the following recommendations to policymakers:

- Review the Megatrends presented in this policy brief, and consider immediate and future implications for regional and local educational efforts.
- Systematically share these Megatrends with school system administrators, school principals, teachers, and interested local citizens.
- Develop and/or implement procedures to prioritize the Megatrends in terms of their immediate and long-term need for attention.
- Integrate the anticipated effects of identified high-priority Megatrends in ongoing policy development, program development, and staff development activities.

For its part, PREL will incorporate the Pacific Megatrends into its ongoing strategic planning processes. They will be an important consideration when forming program plans and writing proposals. They will also be used in conjunction with needs assessment surveys in the region, during entity planning meetings, and in the work of PREL's leadership teams in program areas. With the full cooperation of the entire educational community, from educators to program planners to policymakers, the Megatrends planning process and the seven identified Pacific trends will provide a road map for the continuing success and improvement of education in the Pacific region, well into the future.

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